

1978
K Robinson (R.)

The Nature and Necessity of early Piety.

A

S E R M O N ⁹

PREACHED TO

A Society of Young People,

AT

WILLINGHAM, CAMBRIDGESHIRE;

ON THE

First Day of the YEAR M,DCC.LXXII.

*Ye shall command your children to observe to do all the words
of this law; for it is not a vain thing for you: it is
your life.* Deut. xxxii.

Quod enim munus reipublicæ afferre majus meliusve
possumus, quam si doceamus atque erudiamus JUVEN-
TUTEM; his præsertim moribus atque temporibus,
quibus ita prolapsa est, ut omnium opibus refrænanda
atque coercenda sit? Cic. de Div. Lib. ii. 4.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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S. E. R. M. G. N.

A Society of Young People

WILLIAM LAM, O. S. M. D. M. A.

THE DAY OF THE YEAR



THE SECOND PART

Printed by W. L. in White Street, 1851

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon was preached at an annual meeting, which may apologize for its length. To a society of youths, which the candid will consider as an excuse for whatever may appear exotic: what would have been impertinent to others, may be allowed (we presume) not improper to the young and inexperienced. It is printed now, because "the best service we can do our country is to form the manners of youth, especially in these times of luxury, in which all manner of helps are necessary to bridle and restrain their impetuosity." That this weak effort may serve that purpose is the earnest prayer of

R. ROBINSON.

CAMBRIDGE, Jan. 17th, 1772.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following is a list of the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various committees of the Board of Education, for the purpose of conducting the business of the Board, and of reporting to the Board on the progress of the same. The names of the persons who have been appointed to the various committees of the Board, for the purpose of conducting the business of the Board, and of reporting to the Board on the progress of the same, are as follows:—

R. ROBINSON.

Candidate Jan. 17th 1877.

A

S E R M O N, &c.

PSALM cxliv. 11, 12.

Rid me, and deliver me from strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a hand of falshood: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth: that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.

HAVE you never observed, my Christian brethren, the wisdom and severity of that punishment which the law of *Moses* inflicted on a disobedient son? *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place: and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice;*

Deut. xxi. 18, &c.

voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard: and all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die. So shalt thou put away evil from among you: and all Israel shall hear and fear. This is a very severe law; it seems at first alike to violate the light of nature and the law of love. Every parent recoils at the thought of correction: a religious parent is particularly averse to it, for he knows the infirmities of human nature, and makes the proper allowances. If a father could execute so severe an office, is it not an excess of severity to require a mother's concurrence? All tenderness as she is, must she have *no compassion on the son of her womb?* Must she become cruel like the ostrich in the wilderness? Was it only a private correction, or known only to domestics, it would be painful; but here the parents must expose the criminal, and publish the crime, as well to the censorious populace as to the inflexible magistrates of the place: yea, the doleful history must be told, and re-told through all the tribes of Israel, that *all may hear and fear.* Had the law stopped here, it would have been extremely mortifying; but it proceeded to a shocking death, not by the hand of an executioner rendered dreadfully skilful by practice, but any man, every man, *all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die.*

Severe as this law was of itself, it might become much more so by circumstances. What if this rebellious son was handsome! his features regular, his mein genteel, his address easy and affable; (and sometimes all these qualities are blended with immorality,) would it not distress one to see so much beauty overwhelmed with so much infamy?

What

What if the natural abilities of his mind were great! if greatness of capacity, fruitfulness of invention; if all that forms a superior genius was united in this lovely youth with disobedience: (and this you know is sometimes the case) would it not render the execution still more distressing? What if a liberal education had cultivated his natural abilities! If he had been *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians*, a linguist, an astronomer, a philosopher, a first-rate scholar; (alas my brethren, some of the finest scholars have been *gluttons and drunkards*!) would not his death have been more horrid still? Suppose him the son of a noble family, whose ancestors had held the first rank in the state, or the highest offices in the church. Suppose him an only son, on whom, as on an axis, all the hopes of the family roll'd. Suppose him . . . but we need not proceed, enough has been said to convince you that severity marks this law, and that Moses when he received it had reason to exclaim, *I exceedingly fear and quake!*

Yet, this law, with all its severity, was full of wisdom. The more interests involved in the punishment, the stronger the motives to avoid. The Mosaic æconomy was calculated for the temporal prosperity, as well as for the eternal felicity of the Jews; now nothing is more closely connected with both, than the religious education of children; and to secure that was the design of this institution. None of these public punishments were to be inflicted, till private corrections had been repeatedly tried: if all means used to instill virtue, or to reform vice proved ineffectual, then, but never till then,

was

was this sacrifice to be made for the public good : then the unhappy youth was to terrify by his death, those whom he had refused to edify by his life. What parent foreseeing the consequences could refuse to watch over his son night and day ? Who but would avail himself of all the softness and docility of childhood, of every method of insinuation and instruction, of all the power of a good example ? in a word, Who but would attempt every thing to rescue a child from this calamity ? lest, great as the affliction might be of itself, it should be still increased by reflecting that the negligence of the father was the murder of the son. In such a case, citizens around and conscience within, like thunder claps redoubled, would reproach a parent : his ears and his heart would tingle with *Destruction upon destruction. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee. This is thy wickedness. It is bitter, it reacheth unto thine heart.*

Not only was this law intended to interest parents in the education of their children in general, but it was also particularly pointed at that part of parental conduct, which, of all others, is the most fatal to youth : I mean, a foolish fondness. If severity hath slain its thousands, indulgence hath slain its ten thousands. Human nature seems even in its infancy conscious of its dignity, that it was formed to govern not to truckle. Very early therefore it assumes authority. Parents should direct this noble natural dictate to its proper object. Instead of submitting to be governed by their children, they should teach their children to govern themselves. If it can be done by mildness, well : if not, severity must be tried. The author of this law perfectly

perfectly understood human nature, and wisely directed a parent how to avoid a penalty, which might at once be both a motive and a law. *If when they have chastened him he will not hearken to them: then shall they bring him out.*

Yea, in case of a public execution, the worst issue that parental negligence and youthful obstinacy could come to here: even in such a case, the statute is stamped with the legislator's wisdom: the carelessness of one might rouse thousands into activity; the death of one might spare an infinite number of lives, for *all Israel shall hear and fear.*

All Israel shall hear and fear. Should Israel refuse attention to this important subject; Should Israel count the things of God's law *strange things*; Should Israel loathe her husband and her children, she would deserve the keen reproach of the prophet, *Thou hast not walked after the ways of the heathen, nor done after their abominations: but as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they all in thy ways:* for the heathens abounded with sage maxims on this head, and thought "the most diligent use of them scarcely sufficient to restrain the corruption of human nature." (1) Some of their wisest lawgivers precluded the ill-consequences of parental weakness by forbidding a private education, by making the instruction of children an affair of state, and by imposing laws of this kind under the most rigorous penalties: So far from tolerating a careless loose education, they have been thought to carry their severities even too far. (2) Heathens of the

B

highest

(1) Μολίς γὰρ ἂν ἡ ἐκ ταύτης τῆς σπουδαίας τῆς τῆς ΦΥΣΕΩΣ ΑΜΑΡΤΙΑΣ ἀπικρατησίην. Isot. ad Demon. Idem ad Nicoc. 1.

Xenoph. Memorab. Lib. I. cap. 2. Lib. iv. cap. 2. Plut. de educ. lib.

(2) Solon, Lycurgus, &c.

Hof. viii. 12. Ezek. xvi. 45. 47.

highest rank, and of both sexes have educated their children themselves: (3) and knowing the futility of precept without example, have governed themselves with a scrupulous delicacy for their children's sakes. (4) Their historians ascribe their national grandeur to an universal virtue instilled in childhood; and to the want of it, the worst agree with the wisest in ascribing their national ruin, (5) David, who, besides possessing all the natural sagacity and penetration of a great prince in common with the heathens, was inspired with the holy spirit; David, I say, knew the importance of a good education, and in this psalm tells you, how closely personal domestic and national happiness are connected with it.

This

(3) As Aurelia the mother of Julius Cæsar. Atia the mother of Augustus. Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi. Dial. de orat. cap. xxviii.—The mother of Agricola. Tacit. vit. Agric. cap. iv.—The father of Atticus, Corn. Nep. in vita Attici, cap. I.—The Emperor Augustus himself educated Caius, and Lucius, whom he had adopted. Sueton. in vit. Aug. cap. lxiv.

(4) Cato Censor tanti exempli fuit, ut Manlium senatu moverit, quod interdum PRÆSENTE FILIA uxorem suavisset: asserens se a sua nunquam nisi cum tonaret præ timore complexum esse. Et H. Epicharmum comicum mulctasse et pœna affecisse dicitur, quod CORAM FILIA lascivos edidisset versus. Alex. ab Alex. gen. dier. Lib. ii. cap. xxv. Plut. vit. Catonis Cens. Utinam liberorum nostrorum mores non ipsi perderemus, &c. Quint. Inst. Lib. i. cap. 2. See Juv. Sat. xiv.

(5) Bello et pace, foris et domi, omnem in partem Romana virtus tum se approbavit. Flor. i. 18.

Postquam, remoto metu Punico, majorum mores non paulatim, ut antea, sed torrentis modo præcipitati: adeo JUVENTUS luxu atque avaritia corrupta est, uti memento dicatur, genitos esse, qui neque ipsi habere possent res familiares, neque alios pati. Inter fragm. Sallustii.—to the same purpose, Polybius, Livy, Tacitus, and others; the last of whom hath this remarkable sentence: Nec enim unquam atrocioribus pop. R. claudibus, magisve iustis judiciis approbatum est, non esse curæ deis securitatem nostram, esse *Ultionem*. Hist. I. 3.

This psalm is the language of a prince who wished his people's prosperity: that their *garners might be full of all manner of stores*: that their *sheep might bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets*: that their *oxen might be fat for slaughter, or strong for labour*: that there might be neither robbery nor beggary in their streets: no oppressive magistrates, nor complaining people: and as if all these blessings were to be derived from the character of the people, and the character of the people from the education they had received; our text is a prayer for the youth of Judea. *Deliver me from the hand of strange children, that our sons may be as plants, and so on.*

If this psalm was composed in David's old age, it was the voice of his own experience, as well as of observation, history, and inspiration. Not only had he observed the happiness of him whose *wife was a fruitful vine by the sides of his house*: whose *children were like olive-plants round about his table*, thriving under a wise culture: not only had he heard the fatal effects of Eli's negligence: but his own indulgence of his son Adonijah, had well-nigh cost him his crown and life; *him, his father had not displeased at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so*: A sad experience therefore had taught him, that it is not

B 2

enough

Hence the Satyrist,

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,

• • • NEC PUERI CREDUNT. • • •

Sed tu vera puta. Curius quid sentit, et ambo

Scipiadae? Quid Fabricius, manesq; Camilli?

Quid Cremerae legio, et Cannis consumpta JUVENTUS,

Tot bellorum ahimae?

Juv. Sat. II. v. 149.

IMBERBIS JUVENIS, tandem custode remoto,

Gaudet equis, canibusque, et aprici gramine campi, &c.

Hor. de art. poet. 161.

Psal. cxxviii. 1 Sam. ii. 27. iii. 13. 1 Kings i. 6. Verse 10.

enough for God to give a man * *victory* over his enemies ; (this indeed he is thankful for) but he must also have œconomy in his family to make him truly happy. What parent in this assembly is insensible to this ? Yes, young people ; *children which God hath graciously given his servants* ; we bow our knees to the Father of heaven, and bless him for our past deliverances, present enjoyments, and future hopes ; yet how shall we sing the Lord's song, when *he calleth as in a solemn day our terrors round about, when those that we have swaddled and brought up, the enemy of souls consumeth ?* Now therefore stand still that we may reason with you before the Lord. Blessed spirit, who knowest our utter inability to speak or hear as we ought ; whose wisdom alone can dictate, whose power alone can impress thy word to saving purposes, mercifully enlighten our minds, and sanctify our hearts in this service. Amen.

To explain and inforce our text is all that will be attempted. It is necessary to explain it, that we may form a clear idea of the nature of early obedience : and to inforce it, that we may feel the necessity of reducing our knowledge to practice. These are means of God's appointing, but as they are only means, I trust you will pray while we speak, that the Lord would make them effectual. May *he that dwelleth between the cherubims come and save you !*

Rid and deliver me from strange children. Strange children, either means foreigners ; not natives of Judea, (6) but

* Margin.

(6) Alienum pro alienigena, seu peregrino ponitur. Ut in Isa. lxii. 8. in eodem sensu passim sere apud ethnicos sumitur.

Πρωτοι μεν ημεις κ; ΕΕΝΟΙ, ΕΕΝΟΣ δε συ.

Sophoc. Oed. Col. 1400.

Gen. xxxiii. 5. Lam. ii. 22. 1 Sam. xii. 7. Psalm lxxx.

but young people of neighbouring idolatrous nations ; consequently, people whose notions about the deity and divine things, were erroneous, and whose company might therefore be dangerous to the sound *principles* of the Jewish youth ; this perhaps is meant by their *mouth speaking vanity*. Or, by *strange children* we are to understand, children not born in lawful marriage, (7) whose guilty parents, ashamed of such children, often abandon them to their natural propensities to vice, without being able to oppose a good example of their own, or an holy education by others. The company of such must be dangerous to the *morals* of the Jewish youth, for *their right hand is a right hand of falsehood*. Or the phrase *strange children*, may even mean those whose vicious inclinations defeat the best of educations. (8) From each of these the Psalmist prays to be delivered.

Free from evil company as a nursery from weeds and beggary, may our *sons grow up as plants in their youth*, may they acquire strength of body, and fruitfulness, or wisdom of mind. As trees take their form while young, and unless they thrive then never gain any considerable size after ; so may our children profit early by the instructions of their parents and masters, for if that season of pliability and docility be ineffectual, it is not likely that any after-instructions should avail.

May our *daughters be as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace*, that is, may they strengthen and adorn their families, their country, and the church of

God :

(7) Filius alienæ, id est *filius meretricis*. Prov. vii. 5. pro scortis peregrina ponitur in Terentii Andri. Eun. et Phorm.

(8) Jer. ii. 12. υιοι αλλωτριου. Degeneres filii.

God : to which end may every thing that strengthens and adorns their bodies or their minds be perpetuated among them. Both these sentences are figurative, both in general are put for strength and beauty, among heathen as well as sacred writers. (9) Let us quit the figure and pursue the meaning. David prays for strength and beauty of *body*. Strength and beauty of *mind*. Strength and beauty of *moral virtue*. Strength and beauty of *true christianity*. When these things are found in youth, then do they resemble lofty timbers or richly laden fruit trees, then are they the columns of a building, whose bases support, whose capitals adorn the whole : or, as our text expresseth it, then are *our sons as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace.*

Strength and beauty of body. The human body is one of the Creator's noblest works, a compact and delicate machine, *fearfully and wonderfully* contrived at once to serve the Creator's glory and our utility. Ah! what pity that it should so often be debased to the vilest purposes ! did God *form the eye* to look mischief, or *plant the ear* to admit slander, or *make man's mouth* alternately to *bless God, and to curse men who are made after the similitude of God?* *I speak*

(9) Pandarus et Bitias, Idæi Alcanore creti :

Quos Jovis eduxit luco sylvestris Hiera,

Abretibus juvenes patriis et montibus equos.

Confurgunt geminae quærens, &c.

Virg. *Æn* Lib. ix. 672.

Domus Assaraci.

Virg. *Æ*. 1. 287.

Homines *ad id* esse similes arbitremini :

Primum dum parentes fabri liberum sunt,

Et fundamentum subtruunt liberorum.

Hinc columna familiae. prov. Plaut. *Mof*. A. 1. S. 2.

Pfal. cxxxix. Pfal. xciv. 9. Ex. iv. ii. James iii. 9.

I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness: even so now yield your members servants to righteousness. Young people reverence your bodies: Avoid luxury which enervates, and practise temperance which preserves them.

Accustom yourselves to a temperate frugal diet. Gluttony and drunkenness are odious vices in any, most of all detestable in young people; and what, think ye, is the high-road to these? is it not consulting the appetite more than the health? is it not tickling the palate with delicacies? and will not an immoderate use of even the most plain and simple foods conduct to the same end? A voracious appetite is a misfortune, a dainty one a curse, and a disposition to increase rather than diminish these evils, is devilish. How amiable the patriarchal simplicity! then a little balm and a little honey, a few nuts, spices, and almonds, were presents for a prince. A cake baked on the hearth, veal served up with butter and milk was Abraham's feast when Angels were his guests. Accordingly, they reaped the benefit of their frugality, they had the blessings of heaven above, the blessings of the deep beneath, blessings of the breasts and the womb, their bows abode in strength, and the arms of their hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Have gluttony or drunkenness these advantages?

Accustom yourselves to a decent dress. Cleanliness we expect from the poorest, modesty and decency from the richest; some diseases follow rags, others robes: the way of health is the middle way, and excess does but anticipate old age, and meet its infirmities half way. If

fashion

fashion be your law, you are enslaved to a cruel task-master, whose precarious edicts, with all the penalties annexed to them, it will be your glory to free yourselves from: nor will your freedom cost you much, you cannot be at a loss for a guide: If no apostle will direct you, if no thoughtful heathen will direct you, (1) be instructed by those that have fallen a sacrifice to fondness for dress: See there, *instead of a sweet smell, a stink; instead of a girdle, a rent; instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a stomacher, a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.* In this age of luxury you need not look far for such sad examples as these.

Proper *exercise* is necessary for the health of your bodies. Idleness, which is an enemy to every thing good, is irreconcilable to health: nor is there a more pitiable character than a youth benumbed and stupified by this intoxicating folly. By indolence the noblest advantages of body are useless: while industry and application give superior places to inferior qualifications. One class of diseases await indolence: another violence: these are officers

(1) Pythagoras Crotonam venit, populumque in luxuriam lapsum, auctoritate sua ad usum frugalitatis revocavit. Matronas pudicitiam, et obsequia in viros, pueros modestiam, et literarum studium docebat. Inter hæc velut genitricem virtutum frugalitatem omnibus ingerebat; consecutus que disputationum assiduitate erat, ut matronæ auratas vestes, cetera que dignitatis suæ ornamenta, velut instrumenta luxuriæ deponerent. . . . præ se ferent es VERA ORNAMENTA MATRONARUM PUDICITIAM, NON VESTES ESSE.

Just. Hist. L. xx. C 4. See 1. Pet. iii. 3. 4 5.

Ambubaiarum collegia, pharmacopolæ,
Mendici, mimæ, balatrones; hoc genus omne

Mœstum ac sollicitum est cantoris morte Tigelli:

Quippe benignus erat.

Horat. Sat. i. 2.

Isa. iii. 24.

officers of the King of Kings, placed on either side of the road to keep us in the only safe path. In lawful business, in proper relaxations, in every stage of life avoid these two extremes, nor suffer yourselves to be deluded with the false delicacies of this age of intemperance. When the ancient Romans wanted a dictator they fetched one from the plough: when man was in paradise he was ordered to *dress the garden and to keep it*: nobly exemplified by St. Paul, who could say, I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, yea, you yourselves know that *these hands* have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.

Let me add with the wise man, *Love not sleep*. Much less is required for the health of the body than is generally allowed: yea, what is generally allowed, is perhaps one cause of the effeminacy and folly of the present times. So true is that saying, *Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger!*

What contributes probably more than all to the health of the body is a proper government of the passions, abstaining from *youthful lusts, following after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord with a pure heart*: but this belongs to the mind. Without pursuing this subject any farther therefore, let us in general observe, that on these depend the strength and beauty of the body: a slave to sensuality is a mere brute, his very shape is disguised: that the image of God should be debased into such brutality how dreadful! Is it the glory of the palate to relish poisons? of the eyes to be red

with

Cic. Orat pro S. Ros Gen. ii. 15. Acts xx. 33, 44.
Prov. xx. 13. Prov. xix. 15. 2 Tim. ii. 22.

with wine, or filled with adultery? Is fin the beauty or the deformity of the body? the decorum or the distortion of the features? Shew me a sensualist, and a child can answer, *Whose image and superscription is this?*

The health and strength of his people's bodies may seem too trifling for David's concern. Not at all; he acts perfectly in character: it is the father of his people whose compassion, it is the Lord of his subjects whose policy, dictates the text. Health, and in order to that, temperance, is of the greatest importance in a state. Health makes a brave soldiery, a dauntless navy: husbandry in the country, and ingenuity in the city; the inventions of artists and the penetrations of scholars; manufactories at home and merchandize abroad all depend on the health of the body: all are impracticable attempts without it. Old people are discharged from these, and youth must bear the heat and burden of all these; yet which of these is an intemperate youth fit for? Alas! like *salt that hath lost its savor, he is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill*: he renounces at once the world and the church. Ah! when luxury hath enervated a youth, when to his anticipated old age *the grasshopper is a burden*, when he starts at *the voice of a bird*, would he be imprisoned for the truth, or burn in defence of it? Poor timorous fluctuating thing! too tender and delicate to adventure to *set the sole of its foot on the ground*, a little dirt is a *Lion in the street*: a cloud affrights from a religious exercise: the heat of a crowded audience, the cold of a thin one, are hazards too great to run for the word of God: yea the rigour of the closet makes meditation and

prayer

Luke xix. 34. Eccl. xii. 4, 5. Deut. xxviii. 54.

prayer impracticable. Is this, young men, is this to grow up like plants in your youth? Is this, young women, is this to be polished after the similitude of a palace.

We suppose in the next place that the Psalmist prayed for the *strength and beauty of his people's minds*. David was himself a man of fine genius, and a great part of the glory of his reign was owing to his discretion in employing the capacities of his people in their proper spheres: his generals were *lion-like men, as swift as roes upon the mountains*; he had a Joab over his host; Jehoshaphat for a recorder; Sheva for a scribe; and Zadok for a priest; he found a Chenaniah to manage the vocal, and an Asaph to guide the instrumental music of the temple; he could tell his successor that there were *workmen with him in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work*: and this the scripture calls *executing judgment and justice among his people*. We must suppose therefore, that the capacities of his people are intended, and aptly signified, by *planting a tree, and polishing a stone*, in the text.

The body is a curious machine of itself, but how it rises in value when impregnated with an immortal soul! Indeed all our notions about the soul are rather *negative* than *positive*, (forgive me these terms,) I mean, we can easier tell what it is not than what it is. It is immaterial, that is, it is not fire, it is not water, it is not air, it is not to be heard, seen, felt, measured, weighed, it is not like any thing that falls under the the notice of our senses:

C 2

but

1 Chron. xii. 8.

xxii. 15.

xviii. 14.

but positively, what is a spirit no philosopher can define, no pencil describe. It is immortal, that is, it cannot die; but what is its life? In other things, *wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness*, but in this, *it happeneth to the wise even as to the fool*.

The soul, like the eye, seems formed to contemplate other objects, not itself; in contemplating them however, it finds itself capable of operations which no other being can perform. And indeed the more the soul reflects on its own operations, the more sublime and god-like does its nature appear: for in this, as in all other cases, sober reasoning conducts to revelation, nor stumbles at that declaration, *in the image of God created he him*. Inestimable jewel! Shouldest thou lay unnoticed, unpolished in a body, like a diamond in a rock? *Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?*

Reflect a moment, my young friends, on the wonderful capability of your own minds. Every operation astonishes. Intelligence, for instance. How many thousand different things do your minds comprehend the nature, and general properties of? Earth, air, fire, water, trees, plants, flowers, birds, beasts, fishes, insects, *bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial, one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars*. Grand peculiarity! In this respect the poorest boy in the assembly surpasses the sun in excellence. The sun, all glorious as it is, can neither reflect on its own splendor, think of the moon, observe the planets, nor knows any thing about the worlds

Eccles. ii. 14, 15.

Gen. i. 27.

Prov. xvii. 16.

1 Cor. xv. 40, 41.

worlds it illuminates; but that poor boy can do all these things: the sun hath revolved on its axis many a century, but remembers nothing of all this; the sun will continue to revolve on its axis many a century still, but takes no pleasure in a prospect of its duration: alike incapable of sensation, reflection, and hope. No, this is your privilege, immortal youths, yours without distinction of rank, *from the first-born of him that sitteth upon his throne, to the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill.*

Be sensible of this dignity of your natures, know that this rich soil wants cultivating, and that we may apply to a neglected soul what the prophet says of a deserted, uncultivated country: *thorns shall come up in her palaces, and nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: it shall be an habitation for dragons, and a court for owls: the wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, the satyr shall cry to his fellow, the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest: there shall the great owl make her nest, and lay and hatch: the streams shall be turned into pitch, and the dust into brimstone: he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness: the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*

Would you avoid this? *Study your own geniusses.* (2)
God hath variegated the powers of the mind, as he hath
the

Ex. xi. 5. Isa. xxxiv. Rev. xviii. 2.

(2) Hanc habet vim præceptum Apollinis, quo monet, ut se quisque noscat. Non enim credo, id præcipit, ut membra nostra aut staturam figuramve noscamus. Cum igitur NOSCE TE, dicit, hoc dicit, NOSCE ANIMUM TUUM. Cicer. Tusc. Disp. i. 22.

the features of the face. A great capacity is no merit to him that hath it; a narrow one no sin. In God's great house, there are vessels of gold and of silver, of wood and of earth, some for the noblest, and some for the meanest uses: it is not for man to say, *Why hast thou made me thus?* but to purge himself that he may be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. For want of studying their own capacities, how many have disgraced occupations to which they were not equal, when they might have excelled in others for which God had formed them! *Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds to hear the bleatings of the flocks? Why did Asa continue in harbor? or Dan remain in his ships?*

When you know your own capacities, improve them. Other animals are instantly at the top of their perfection. The little bee bursts its cell, flies into the fields, collects wax and honey, returns to the hive, forms a cell of exact dimensions, stores it with honey, and improves no farther by age and experience: but it is not so with you, your powers improve by exercise, and exercise is essential to their improvement. If you would investigate truth, you must accustom yourselves to reason: if you would have a tenacious memory, you must habituate yourselves to remember: would you have a lively imagination, exercise your fancy: all the operations of your minds, like the senses of your bodies, have their own proper objects: to be often turning them to these objects is your improvement.

Avoid all that weakens and wastes your capacities. Your minds,

2 Tim. ii. 20, 21. Judg. v. 16, 17.

minds, however expansive, have yet their limits: they are not, they cannot be equal to every thing. Without enquiring whether our fashionable diversions be compatible with reason or religion: whether cock-fighting, boxing, and such diversions of the poor favor most of reason or barbarity: whether card-playing, dancing, and other amusements of the rich belong to politeness or buffoonery: (3) without enquiring this, it is enough to say that they divide and dissipate the capacity, and in this case to dissipate is to destroy.

Avoid the profanity of neglecting to ask the assistance of God by fervent prayer. Pagans ascribe all their excellencies to the Almighty; and the holy scriptures are abundant in this. Scripture is rational, but paganism is enthusiastic on this head. With the Heathens, all is done by the care and counsel of the gods. (4) An affecting tragedy, a moving oration, a flowing poem, are all impossible except to an *enthusiast*, that is, to a man whose genius is animated and filled with the Deity. (5) The holy scriptures never fail to direct us to the same source. From God's infinite intelligence came all the *riches* and varieties

(3) See what Tully calls HUMANITER VIVERE, in Epist. Lib. vii. Ep. i.

Verum equitis quoque jam migravit AB AURE voluptas
Omnes AD incertos OCULOS, et gaudia vana.

Hor. Epist. L. ii. Ep. i,

(4) Διος δ' ετελειετο Βουλη.

Homer.

(5) Της δε ΘΕΟΠΙΝΕΥΣΤΟΥ σοφης λογος εστιν αριστος.

Βελιερος αλκηνειος εφω σεσοφισμενος ανηρ.

ΑΓΡΟΥΣ κ' ΠΟΛΙΑΣ σοφην κ' ΝΗΑ κυβερνα. Phocyl. 122.

Το σφοδρον κ' ΕΝΘΟΥΣΙΑΣΤΙΚΩΣ παδος, &c.

Longin. Sub. S. viii.

Dion, Halic. de Strucl, orat, S. I.

ties that were assembled in the *fairs* of Tyre, that *covering cherub* whose mercantile influences overspread so many nations. It was he who directed the carpentry, joinery, gilding, carving, and all the embellishments of the temple ; yea the spinning of goats hair for the tabernacle. Not only doth *he discover deep things out of darkness*, but his *wisdom finds out the knowledge of every witty invention*. Not only *by him do kings reign, and princes decree justice*, but by him *the plowman ploweth all day to sow, openeth and breaketh the clods of his ground ; makes plain the face thereof, casts abroad the fitches, scatters the cummin, casts in the principal wheat and the appointed barley, and the rye in their place. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.*

Finally, *Let not the meanness of your birth and education discourage you.* High birth and genteel education are sometimes indeed the appendages of genius, but every body knows that wisdom is often found under a sorry coat. (6) Some of the greatest ornaments of our species sprang from the dunghill. Empires have been governed by those that could neither write nor read. Arts and sciences have been invented or improved by the illiberal and base-born. The highest are always indebted to the lowest, and the miner that works in the earth, and the gardener that tills it, are links in this chain, for *the king himself is served by the field.* And here,
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Ezek. xxvii. 27. xxviii. 14. Job xii. 22. Prov. viii. 12, 15.

Isa. xxviii. 24, 25. 26, 29.

(6) Hic Socrates commemoratur ; hic Diogenes ; hic Cæcilianum illud ; *Sæpe est etiam sub palliolo sordido sapientia.* Cic. Tusc. iii. 23. Eccles. v. 9.

Psa.

one can't help observing the folly of that distress, which too often harrasses the breasts of parents, whose families are large, and whose circumstances are small. Hath God but one way think you of enriching your family? *His understanding is infinite. He sometimes poureth contempt upon princes, and setteth the poor on high from affliction, making him families like a flock.* He can give your poor friendless child a form of body, or a ray of genius, which shall be a portion to him. God can give him a firmness of nerves that shall arm him with a dauntless intrepidity, that intrepidity shall push him to the path where courage riots in the midst of danger; he shall *not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day*: this courage animated by a conscious integrity of heart, shall make him scale a wall, mount a breach, execute a well-concerted battle, gain a victory, a victory on which the lives and properties of thousands depended; and who pray would grudge his enjoying the reward? Or God can enrich by a ray of genius. He shall have the art of combining sounds for music: colours for painting: figures for trade: and this art shall be to him worth a thousand, ten thousand, a hundred thousand pounds. Infinite God! How often have we seen *the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the lasting hills, the precious things of the earth, and fulness thereof, with the good-will of him that dwelt in the bush, crown the head of a Joseph separated from his brethren?* In view of this manifold wisdom, cease, O cease, Christian parent, to

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weep:

Psa. cxlvii. 5.

cvii. 41.

xci. 5.

Deut. xxxiii. 14, &c.

Eph. iii. 10.

weep : *Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for God can make him a great nation.*

David was too wise a prince not to pray for these blessings. And his prayers were answered. Solomon his son spake three thousand proverbs : and his songs were a thousand and five : he spake of trees from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall : he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. His people too received the blessing, they cut out windows, cieled with cedar, painted with vermillion, erected palaces for their princes, and a temple for their God : thus, all adorned religion : thus were they as plants grown up in their youth, as stones polished after the similitude of a palace.

Our text is the prayer of a man who could say, *Rivers of waters ran down mine eyes ; because they keep not thy law.* We do not hesitate therefore to say that the text includes *the strength and beauty of moral virtue.* Indeed if great mental powers be destitute of morality, if men of science and genius be overbearing, babblers, quarrellsome, and dogmatical, unjust, impure, and insolent, all their speculations will be insults on good sense, at best they will be trifles, of no more importance to us than to know how many inches a grasshopper leaps at a time. (7) Virtue therefore, a lovely and a lasting virtue we wish you all to pursue. Distinguish ere mere moral from spiritual attainments. Our Saviour saith, *without me ye can do nothing,* but to infer

(7) Θραους, ευλωτος, πολυμωρος, ιτης. &c. Aristoph. Nub. v. 444.

Αντιρετ' αρτι Χαιρι φωντα Σωκρατης,

Ψυλλαν οποσους αλλοιτο τους αυτης ποδας, Ib 144.

Gen. xxi. & Kings, iv. 32. Jer. xxii. 14. Ps. cxix. 136. John xv. 5.

infer from thence, that, without the regenerating influences of the blessed spirit, we are incapable of natural, civil, and moral actions, is not orthodoxy but extravagance. This would be to erect trophies to God's grace on the ruins of his providence. The God of grace is in perfect harmony with the God of nature, and while we establish Christianity, we should be cautious of advancing any thing to subvert it. The question we ask now, is not whether a man can become a christian without supernatural aid, but whether he can be a good heathen. By what power did the heathens practise so many praise-worthy actions? Whence came their modesty, probity, chastity, fidelity? from the spirit of God, or the dictates of conscience? from the latter no doubt: from that *light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*. St. Paul calls natural religion *the truth of God*, and says, the Gentiles which have not the law, do *by nature* the things contained in the law. What if the bulk of the heathens *changed the truth of God into a lie*? it is the *truth of God* still as far as it goes. Alas! did not the Jews render the law of no effect by their traditions? and have not the bulk of christians vitiated the pure religion of Jesus too? But to return, what the heathens could do who knew not God, that surely you may do; that we solemnly charge you to do: lest Sodom and Gomorrah should rise up in judgment against you.

But what is moral virtue? It is a conformity to that relation which we bear to every being about us, and to that reverence which we owe to ourselves. A little reflection will soon inform a boy that he consists of body and soul: that

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John i. 9 Rom. 1. 24. ii. 24.

the well being of the body depends on temperance, chastity, industry, and so on; that the excellence of his mind is intelligence, and its happiness a certain superiority over those passions that tumultuate and excruciate the bosoms of fools: to each of these speculations he will perceive a practice annexed, these practices are branches of moral virtue. Again, we bear a relation to God, as creatures dependent on a creator from whom we have received all we enjoy, from whom we hope to receive much more; on these accounts, as well as for his own inexpressible grandeur and beauty, we owe him the highest admiration, the profoundest reverence, the most unbounded confidence, with constant acknowledgments of prayer and praise. Once more, we bear the relations of children to our parents, of brethren to our brethren, of neighbours to our neighbours, of subjects to our prince, of fellow-creatures to all our species: some of these relations are distant, some are near, but all have duties belonging to them, and the discharge of these is moral virtue. This moral excellence, this piety towards God and benevolence to men, this, which the heathens call *virtue*, and which our scriptures, especially the book of Proverbs, term *wisdom*, (8) is so well dictated by your own consciences, that I need only at present refer you to them.

Pagans indeed carried morality far, but the church of God always exceeded them. What profane history presents such characters to view as our patriarchs, prophets, princes, and apostles? The former were mere shrubs; the latter *trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord*;

Isai.

Isai. lxi. 3.

(8) Τα; τίτται APETAE, η παρ ημιν ΣΟΦΙΑ

Clem. Alex. Strom. L. vi.

the heathens rough unhewn stones; the people of God *corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace*. And no wonder, the church had advantages which heathens were destitute of; these advantages are yours young people, and let nobody frighten you from them, under pretence that works done before conversion are sinful: Ever believe that these things are good and profitable to men, and that though *after all* in some sense you will be *unprofitable servants*, mere heathens and not christians; yet if you neglect these things, you will be worse than the filthy heathens *whom the land spued out before you*.

We wish you to excel the whole heathen world; we pray that you may become solid, amiable christians, and would fain by you transmit the precious gospel to posterity. This *everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure*, was *all David's desire* for his family, as well as *all his salvation* for himself. He *foresaw the Lord always before his face, rested in his flesh, rejoiced in his heart, was glad with his tongue, because God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne*: to compleat our text therefore, we don't doubt but he prayed for *the strength and beauty of true christianity*. Will you prevent me by saying, this is God's work, we grant it. But what do you infer from that sound maxim? that you may riot in a tavern, or sleep in a bagnio, if God wants he can call you? abominable inference! detestable reasoning! turning the grace of God into wantonness. Alas, poor souls! Is it thus you understand your bibles? hear the prophet Ezekiel.

A new

Luke xvii. 10. Lev. xviii. 28. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Acts. ii.

A new heart will I give you, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall loathe yourselves for your abominations: not for your sakes saith the Lord God do I this, be it known unto you: Is this orthodoxy? hear what follows. Thus saith the Lord, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them. What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

You are therefore to pray for the blessed spirit, the soul of Christ's mystical body, the church: and that you may the better know what to pray for, attend to these few hints. Christianity begins in self-knowledge, and if God imparts his holy spirit to you, it will fill you with a clear conviction of the blindness of your understandings, the obstinacy of your wills, the irregularity of your passions, in a word, of the depravity and corruption of your hearts: from the fullest evidence you will lament *the crown is fallen from our head: wo unto us that we have sinned.*

The blessed spirit will teach you the nature and use of the law: that it requires perfect obedience, that to suppose the contrary is to make God the author of sin; that it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart, that the whole world is therefore guilty before God; that it convinceth of sin, but that *by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight.*

The hand that thus wounded will proceed to heal you, by exhibiting the glorious redeemer, (be his name ever venerable to us!) in the dignity of his person, the merit of his obedience and death, the prevalence of his intercession; in a word, in all that glorious assemblage of

quali-

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. 27. 31. 32. 37. Lam. v. 16. Rom. iii.

qualifications which renders him a sinner's surety. In view of this, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so would we lift up the saviour in the ministry. And as we may suppose a tender parent, in that distressed camp, would carry in his arms a dying, serpent-bitten child, and point his eye to the remedy, so have your parents brought you hither this day, hark ! *It shall come to pass that whosoever looks shall live.* The Lord help you to believe and be saved !

Faith, repentance, love, and every grace is begun, maintained, and compleated by the same spirit. If you have these pray for their increase. It is the harmony of these that forms the real Christian, all are essential to his character, and the want of one proves the absence of all : *Without faith it is impossible to please God,* and without love the most unbounded liberality, the deepest penetration, the zeal of a martyr, and the tongue of an angel would be nothing in the sight of God.

The holy spirit also teacheth his disciples to add to their faith, virtue ; to virtue, knowledge ; to knowledge, temperance ; to temperance, patience ; to patience, godliness ; to godliness, brotherly-kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. He frees from ignorance and intemperance, the vices of the profane ; and from impatience, hypocrisy, and bigotry, the vices of the pharisee : and thus he makes *your calling and election sure* to yourselves, and to the church of God ; and when you die, ministrETH an entrance abundantly unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Finally

Heb. vii. 22. John iii. 14. Numb. xxi. 8. Heb. xi. 6.

1 Cor. xiii. 2 Pet. i.

Finally, he will lead you to the source of all; the everlasting and distinguishing love of God in Jesus Christ. He will shew you that Jesus, and all his rich salvation is not the procuring cause, but rather the strong expression of the love of God: and on repeated views of this immense treasure and your participation of it, you will frequently cry, *Thine O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I?*

We have said, pray for these things. Do this, but do more. Diligently hear God's word preached. Search the scriptures. Chuse the company of good people. Study yourselves. Learn your hymns and catechisms. Begin with the simple, thence proceed to the sublime truths of the gospel. Believe, in spite of all the florishes of falsehood, that as these simple means spread christianity at first, and reformed it when it was corrupted, so they are the most likely to succeed still. *No man having drank old wine straitway desireth new; for he saith the old is better!*

Put all these things together, assemble them in one youth, and he riseth an angel to view. In an agreeable healthy body, a capacious well cultivated mind; a conduct made up of the *just* and the *lovely*; a soul enriched with every grace that dignifies human nature, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and changing into the same image from glory to glory. What melody in his language while he says, *The Lord is my strength and song,*

John. iii. 16. 1 Chron. xxix. 11. 13. 14. Luke v. 25. Phil. iv. 8.

Ex. xv. 11.

he is become my salvation ; he is my God and I will prepare him an habitation : my father's God and I will exalt him. The venerable elders with his parents bless him : his pastor in the name of each faith, God before whom my fathers did walk ; the God who fed me all my life long ; the angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad, may he grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

Thus we understand our text. Indulge me with your attention a little longer, while I endeavour to enforce your obedience. May the finger of God write everlasting characters on your hearts !

Pardon me if I tell you that ignorance only makes persuasion necessary : for did you indeed see vice in its own proper undisguised features, did you but see virtue, in its own symmetry and beauty, you could not but chuse virtue, and refuse vice. Every object of thought produceth an effect on the mind, as sensible objects produce their effects on the body. I may remove from a fire, but I cannot approach it without feeling certain sensations in my body ; at one distance, I am warmed ; at a nearer, heated ; at a nearer still, scorched ; and at another approach I am burnt. It is just the same with the mind. I may turn my eyes from virtue, but I cannot look but I must love. I may avoid reflecting on vice, but if I reflect, I abhor. Fixed and unalterable laws, as independent on me as the motions of the planets, determine these effects. But you turn your eyes from these, or what's worse, you see them through false mediums ; through fashion, or custom, through an endless train of prejudices ; through the opinions of those that live without reflection, and die without repentance.

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Must

Must we then attempt to persuade you? Why, what can be said which hath not been said a thousand times? and shall we again *plow upon the rock*? Yet God is rich in mercy, therefore behold, *I will this once cause you to know.*

Consider young people *the authority of God.* It is God who saith to you, *remember your creator in the days of your youth*: he speaks it in his word, he speaks it by his ministers, he speaks it by your own consciences. Were you angels, it would shock one to hear you say, *Who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice?* and will you like little serpents, will you rear your presumptuous crests, and hiss at him? *will ye also disannul his judgment? will ye condemn him that he may be righteous? hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering: the pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof: he divided the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud: who hath hardened himself against him and hath prospered? true, he is slow to anger; but yet great in power, he will not at all acquit the wicked. True, he is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; but yet, the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea the world, and all that dwell therein. Out of Zion the perfection of beauty, God hath already shined, but by and by he shall come, and shall not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heaven from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.*

O acquaint

Amos vi. 12. Jer. xvi. 21. Ex. v. 2. Job xl. 8. xxvj.
Nah. i. 3. 7. 5. Psal. i. Job. xxii. 21.

O acquaint yourselves now with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you.

Reflect on the nature of what you are invited to. Every other creature seeks a good suited to its nature, and having found that good enjoys it: doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? But you, while you live in sin, violate every dictate of nature, as well as every command of scripture. You love happiness: we ask you to love God with all your heart, and you tell us, this would destroy all your happiness. *Ah foolish people and unwise!* has religion no charms then? no rewards? what vice is it that appears so desirable, and clothed with so much beauty? What! eyes full of adultery, a tongue set on fire of hell, a mouth full of cursing and bitterness, a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! What! brute beasts that corrupt themselves, clouds driven about with the winds, raging waves of the sea, foam-
ing out their own shame, the blackness of darkness for ever, are these the charms that allure you? O blindness and madness! Look at that old debauchee, grown grey in the devil's service; his bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. Though forty years ago wickedness was sweet in his mouth, yet he sucked the poison of asps, and now the gall of asps is within him. Is that poor, decrepid, guilty thing sinking under the weight of infirmities and iniquities, is that your model young men? O could you see the tempers of his heart as you do the features of his face, you would see an image of him whom scripture calls the dragon, that old serpent

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which

Job. vi. 5. 2 Pet. ii. 14. James iii. 6. Rom. iii. 14. Jude xiii.
Jer. xvii. 9. Job xxi. Rev. xx. 2.

which is the devil! formidable creatures! *my soul come not thou into their secret!* But virtue is lovely, infinitely lovely, all description throws a vail over its beauty. Don't judge of virtue and vice metaphysically: assemble on the one hand, the vicious of every age and climate; the Cains, the Pharaohs, the Judasses, the whole world of rebels, with Satan and his infernal legion at their head: place on the other, the just, the generous, the meek, the benevolent people of God, those whom *the ear blessed when it heard, whom the eye gave witness to when it saw, with the brightness of the Father's glory at their head.* One of these companies you must imitate, one of these you must join, and associate with for ever. Conscience, I conjure thee in the name of God to do thine office. Ah! *ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him.*

Think a little on *your interest.* Interest is a powerful motive among mankind. For interest they deny themselves a thousand pleasures; for interest they expose themselves to a thousand dangers, and often for a mistaken interest. Religion pleads with you on this head to-day. It is the interest of your body, which religion preserves, which iniquity destroys; for *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.* It is the interest of your soul, which without religion is irretrievably lost; for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* It is the interest of your family; for *the curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked; but he blesteth the habitation of the just.* It is the interest of your circumstances; for *there is that scattereth*

Gen. xlix. 6. Job xxix. 11. Josh. xxiv. 22. Psa. lv. 23.
 Heb. xii. 14. Prov. iii. 33. xi. 24.

tereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty. It is the interest of your diversions; for the wicked man travelleth with pain all his days, a dreadful sound is in his ears. It is the interest of your character: indeed in a world made up of righteous and wicked, it is impossible to gain the applauses of both; yet somehow or other, even a wicked man's conscience will approve what he hath not the courage to imitate; he that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend. In youth, in manhood, in old age; abroad, at home, at meeting, at market; alone, in company; in prosperity and in adversity; in the gaieties of life, and in the agonies of death; religion is your best and truest interest.

*Meditate a moment on the necessity of gratitude. Favors confer obligations which all but devils love to discharge. Ingratitude is a vice so black that the world disowns and detests it. But if you persist in sin, are you not guilty of the most hateful ingratitude? You are a rational creature capable of enjoying God: you are of that species of rationals which God went to redeem, when he passed by angels: you was born in Christendom, not in the wilds of America: not in the bosom of Popery, where the beauty of Christianity is hid under disgustful superstitions, but in a reformed church: your magistrates have protected you: your ministers instructed you: your parents taught you: thousands of friendly hands have assisted you: all these become supplicants to you, all these cry, *only acknowledge thine iniquity.* Will you, like a *wild**

wild ass, snuff up the wind at your pleasure, and practically say there is no hope. No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go? Monster of ingratitude, is this thy kindness to thy friends?

Look at the state of the church. A Christian society is the noblest association in the world, the world, like the house of Obed-edom, is blest for the ark's sake; your ancestors were sensible of this when they hazarded their lives and properties to plant religious assemblies: and are you more concerned to support an ale-house club, than to uphold this society? A society assembled by the express direction of the only wise God, purchased by the invaluable price of Christ's blood, separated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Shall the lives of the apostles, the labours of the fathers, the blood of so many martyrs, the tears of your parents, the prayers of your ministers; shall all these go to support, and will you desert it? Distressing thought! especially to thy father! O how he wishes for David's blessing, *a son grown up like a plant in his youth, to whom when he dies he might say, I go the way of all the earth, but thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do.* Cruel son! wilt thou imbitter death to that good old man by robbing him of this his only hope? Wilt thou bring down his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave? Was you rewarded according to your works, men would clap their hands at you, and hiss you out of your place.

Consider finally therefore *the issue of all*: for rewarded according to your works you will undoubtedly be.

Pleasing as the present scene is, to the impenitent it is but

Jer. iii. 13. ii. 24, 25. 2 Sam. xvi. 17. 1 Kings 11. 2. 9.

Job xxvii. 23.

as the fine dawn of that day in which Sodom was destroyed. Presently perhaps the Lord will reign upon the wicked snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest, for him that loveth violence his soul always hateth. What if the Lord delayeth his coming? Carry your thoughts forward to the longest period of life, at last comes death, you must die, willing or unwilling, stupid or afraid, a loiterer in God's vineyard, or a labourer in the devil's, the day will finish, and you must die: but how? *Terrors shall take hold on you as waters; a tempest shall steal you away in the night, an east-wind as a storm shall hurl you out of your place.* Dreadful as death is, after it comes judgment. How will you look the Judge in the face? There, in the presence of *thousand thousands* that minister to him, of *ten thousand times ten thousand* that stand before him; there, when *the sea gives up the dead which were in it, and death and hell deliver up the dead which were in them; there, when small and great stand before God; there, to the Ancient of days, whose purity is inconceivable, whose vengeance is insufferable, to him who strikes through kings in the day of his wrath, who confoundeth the proudest sinner, and accepteth the meanest service; to him will we solemnly deliver you up, and say, This our son was stubborn and rebellious, he would not obey our voice, he was a glutton and a drunkard.* Then what would you give if all Israel might stone you with stones, that you might die? No, death would be mercy: the Judge shall say *depart into everlasting fire.* Fearful solemnity of inflexible justice! when *hell from beneath shall move to meet thee at thy coming;*

when

Gen. xix. 23. Psa. xi. 5, 6. Job xxvii. 20, 21. Rev. xx. 12, 13. Dan, vii. 9, 10. Psa. cx. 5. Mat. xxv. Isa. xiv. 9.

when he who blessed himself in his heart while he heard the words of the curse, saying, *I shall have peace though I add drunkenness to thirst, shall lie under all the curses of this book; when the anger of Jehovah and his jealousy shall smoke against him, and shall blot out his name from under heaven. When all that fear God shall say Hallelujah, while your smoke riseth up for ever and ever. When these friendly tears of a compassionate stranger shall be dried up; these? Alas! even your parents, free from the weakness of the passions, and full of the equity of the punishment, your parents shall weep no more, but shout Rejoice over her thou heaven.*

Let us finish. Do you say, *pray to the Lord for us, that none of these things which you have spoken may come upon us?* We will do so cheerfully, being affectionately desirous of you, we are willing to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you are dear unto us; but in vain we do all this, except you repent and pray for yourselves. Some of you have religious parents, whose lives are bound up in your's, who wait to assist and encourage you. Go generous youths, *refresh their bowels in the Lord.* Obey the dictates of nature and scripture. While their repeated instructions drop like the rain, and distil as the dew, may you grow like the cedars in Lebanon. When he that planted, and they that watered are dead, may you flourish in the next generation, transmitting to your children, and to your children's children the precious gospel which we commit to you: and when you have out-grown this nursery, may

you

Deut. xxix. 18. Rev. xix. 3. xviii. 20. Acts viii. 22, 24.
1 Thess. ii. 8. Phil. xx. Deut. xxxii. 2. Psa. xc. 11, 12.

you be transplanted into the paradise of God, trees of life, flourishing in unfading verdure for a thousand generations.

Others of you perhaps are *sons of strangers*, whose parents (I blush to speak it in your presence: unnatural parents! what punishments? *But I spare you*) whose parents, careless about their own souls, have abandoned yours. Poor orphans! how much are you to be pitied? Therefore pitiable because rational. Had ye been mere animals, lion's whelps, *the old lioness* would have *learned you to have caught prey and to have devoured men: yea even the sea-monsters would have drawn out their breasts to their young.* But your *fathers have sinned, and you have borne their iniquities.* They have neglected, however, they have not deprived you of reason. Come therefore, be not cast down with overmuch sorrow. Know that it is the glory of the gospel to be accessible to the poor and illiterate, and one page of your catechism will teach you more of God and godliness, than all the wisest of the Heathens ever knew. (9) *Let not the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, the Lord hath utterly separated me from his people, behold I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto them that keep my sabbaths, and*
chuse

1 Cor. vii. 28. Ezek. xix. Lam. iv. 3. v. 7.

(9) Quid enim THALES ille princeps physicorum sciscitanti Cræso de divinitate certum renunciavit, commeatus deliberandi sæpe frustratus? Deum QUILIBET OPIFEX CHRISTIANUS et invenit, et ostendit, licet PLATO affirmet facilitatorem universitatis, neque inveniri facilem, et inventum enarrari in omnes difficilem,
 Tertulliani Apol. Cap. xlvi.

Isa. lvi.

chuse the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. Come then, turn this promise into prayer, say, O Lord, our fathers have inherited vanity and lies, but in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. The church is a Bethesda, a house of mercy, some Paul will plant, some Apollos water, and God will give the increase.

Parents, children, hearers, members of this society, officers of the church, rich, poor, whoever or whatever you are, members of our community, or of any other, I charge you all, as you will answer it at the great and terrible day of the Lord, respect the word of God which you have now heard. You have not been listening to the little peculiarities of a party, but to truths which all our communities profess to believe. Forget every thing but the common salvation, join with the Psalmist in the text. *Rid and deliver us from strange children, that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, our daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace. Happy is the people that is in such a case! Yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord! To him be honor and glory for ever. Amen.*

Jer. xvi. 19. Hos. xiv. 3. 1 Cor. iii. 6. Jude iii.



THE END.

